

## **SAN DIEGO MUNICIPAL COURT**

### **DRUG COURT PROGRAM**

**220 West Broadway, San Diego, CA 92101**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** CONTACT: Honorable Bonnie M. Dumanis, San Diego Drug Court Program 619) 515-8905

San Diego (May 27, 1988)--One year ago, she was a drug addict. She was a prostitute. She lived life on the street, with no hope and no future. Today, she is sober. She is employed. She has goals and, in her words, "an endless world of opportunity."

She is one of twenty-two San Diegans who are being recognized for turning their lives from drug addiction to sobriety at the first San Diego Municipal Court, Drug Court Program graduation, on Wednesday, May 27, 1998, at 6 p.m. in the Jury Lounge of the Hall of Justice, 330 W. Broadway, downtown San Diego. The Honorable Bonnie M. Dumanis of the San Diego Municipal Court will preside over the graduation, which will also be attended by San Diego County Sheriff Bill Kolender, Chief Probation Officer Alan Crogan with remarks by San Diego County Supervisor Ron Roberts, San Diego City Attorney Casey Gwinn, San Diego Public Defender Steve Carroll and a keynote address by San Diego Police Chief Jerry Sanders.

The San Diego Municipal Court, Drug Court Program is a partnership effort involving the San Diego Municipal Court, San Diego Police Department, San Diego City Attorney's Office, and San Diego Public Defender's Office. As a team, the Drug Court works to break the cycle of drug addiction through early intervention, substance abuse treatment, and rehabilitation.

Non-violent criminal offenders facing misdemeanor drug charges are eligible for the year-long Drug Court Program. They plead guilty to all of the charges they are facing, and they agree to postpone sentencing so they can take part in the Drug Court Program. Participants must appear in Court every week to monitor their progress in residential or outpatient treatment programs. They also must submit to regular, random drug testing. They are visited in their homes and their treatment programs by a San Diego Police officer, who acts as the eyes of the ears of the court, ensuring that participants are complying with the strict rules of the Drug Court. To complete the program, participants must demonstrate significant periods of sobriety. Upon completing the program, the participant's criminal case is dismissed. If they fail to comply with the program, they are sentenced.

The San Diego Municipal Court, Drug Court Program began in March 1997. Presently, more than 100 offenders are taking part in the program.

### **DRUG COURT GRADUATION**

The Drug Court concept was initially developed by United States Attorney General Janet Reno in the late 1980s when she helped to establish the first drug court in the United States, the Miami Drug Court, while she was serving as the State Attorney in Dade County (Miami), Florida. Drug Court recognizes that incarceration without treatment does not reduce drug-related crimes. If drug offenders are involved in the criminal justice system primarily because of their substance addiction, statistics show that offenders who are incarcerated alone exhibit a high rate of recidivism once they are released. On the contrary, drug abuse treatment has proven effective in reducing both drug addiction and drug-related crime. It costs about \$3,000 to put a Drug Court participant through treatment for a year,

while it costs \$30,000 to incarcerate that person for a year.

"Drug Court works because it holds participants accountable," Judge Dumanis explained. "Participants who are not in compliance because they test dirty or fail to go to treatment or come to court are immediately sanctioned by time in custody. We have seen our graduating participants grow into productive, law-abiding citizens."

Drug Court participants say the Drug Court Program has given them a new lease on life. "Before I came into drug court my life was insane. Rock cocaine ruled my life and as a result it left me hopeless and destitute. I was doing anything for my next hit . . . prostituting, hustling, stealing, cheating and lying," one graduating participant said. "The requirement of going to an inpatient treatment facility was the turning point in my recovery. I was able to change my street behaviors and mentality, and I identified some core issues which I continue to work on. Also, the frequency of the drug tests made using not an option and tested my willingness for a new life from the beginning."

For further information on the Drug Court Program, please call the Drug Court Office at 515-8905 or Judge Dumanis at 531-3017.

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